Drawing 1 Drawing 2

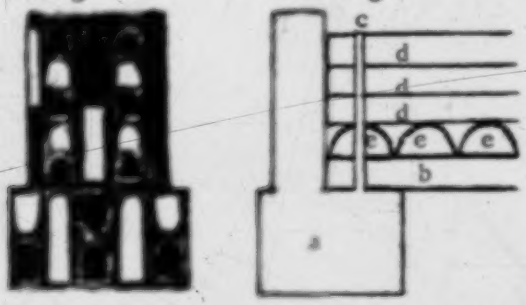

Fig. 29. Painted Socle of a Bench in a Meeting House, Fang Region.
Drawing 1, front view;
Drawing 2, side view.

In many meeting houses, furthermore, one sees /68/ a forge (Fig. 27b, Drawing 1 b) and the tools used by a smith, namely, a bellows suspended from the roof (Fig. 27b, Drawing 1 c) and a smith's stone (Fig. 27b, Drawing 1 c) which at the same time is used as a whetstone and also as a fan for the fire (eyuh e nduan), Figure 32. Finally we must also mention the famous tobacco pipe made from the stem of a banana leaf, which is placed across two hooks in the wall.

It goes without saying that in addition to the above-mentioned furnishings there are all kinds of rubbish lying around in the house, such as half-finished baskets, fishing nets, tools, leftover food, and so forth, scarcely designed to give the whole a more attractive appearance. /Fig. 31 appears here in the original text./

The meeting houses are very seldom embellished with decorative bark, either on the outside (Fig. 33) or on the inside. More frequently, however, we find the bark walls, especially on the gabled sides,

Fig. 30. Rifle Rack, Engugumo, Fang.

• 276

Fig. 107. Wooden Tobacco Pipes.

[52]

Fig. 108. Bowls for Tobacco Pipe of Banana Leafmalks.
(a) Brass plate with a piece of banana leaf malk; (b-d) clay.

273 times as powerful as usual, and the entire mixture was so strong
523 that it caused violent dizziness and headache.

273 The palm wine which is obtained from the pith of a tree trunk that is cut down /169/ (mayɑ̄l k) -nkɑ̄k keeps for 24 hours in the house. On the other hand, the wine made from the inflorescences keeps at most half a day, and in great heat it spoils very rapidly, as I observed; it does the same if one takes it along on a trip. For this reason I followed the rule in the palm wine region of always finishing a good wine immediately or at least as soon as possible.

As I have said, the Pangwe are, generally speaking, moderate drinkers, but among them there are also heavy drinkers who regu-
[164] larly get drunk on palm wine. I shall leave undecided the question as to whether the widespread epilepsy (okū būk) in the northern Pangwe region is a phenomenon resulting from excessive indulgence in palm wine on the part of the parents.

4. Tobacco.

276 Four varieties of tobacco, Nicotiana tabaccum L. (tɑ̄ III) (1)
249

1. The native term may have arisen from tabaco.

are found in the Pangwe region. Formerly there was a fifth variety, but its cultivation has been given up. /Fig. 109 appears here in the original text./ With the exception of two that are very similar, the tobacco varieties are easily distinguished by their leaves. The key for determining each is as follows.

A. Leaves are not alated, and the leafmalk is long and clearly defined: esɑ̄h (esɑ̄'ā because of the similarity of the leaves to those of the Hibiscus sabdariffa L.)

B. Leaves are alated
   (a) Leaves are narrow, lanceolated: sɔ̄mɑ̄ IV
   (b) Leaves are broad, ovate
      1. Blossoms are a bright pink, almost whitish, the leaves being comparatively wider than in the case of the following: mɔ̄dɛlɔ̄'ɔ I

2. Blossoms are dark pink to red, and the plants grow closer to the ground: mbɔ́mekúnɨ́ I

Originally, the Pangwe were not passionate smokers, as a rule, although in every village one encounters old people who cannot live without their pipes. Over the whole region, especially in the north where the influence of the Whites is more predominant (for instance, among the Jaunde), the use of tobacco is rapidly increasing. The quality of imported tobacco and the great variety of pleasing shapes of the pipes for sale in the trading posts may be strong /170/ /Fig. 110 appears here in the original text/ contributing factors.

Fig. 109. Clay Tobacco Pipes.

Next to salt, "trade tobacco" is one of the principal trade articles.

Tobacco is exclusively smoked in pipes; chewing or taking snuff is unknown. The Pangwe distinguish three forms of pipes. First there are short wooden pipes carved out of one piece (only among the Fang), ehɨk-myɔ́ɔ́k (Fig. 107), and secondly, banana leafstalk types (mɔ́ɔ́ I: bowl, ehɨ́k). The latter consist of a piece of banana leafstalk or leaf ribbing, more than a meter long, and a bowl stuck on top of it which is made of the kernel of the raffia fruit, brass plate, or clay (Fig. 108). The stalk needs to be replaced from time to time. In almost every meeting house this form of pipe can be seen on the wall resting on two hooks, and it frequently goes the rounds among the men, on which occasion the chief is the first to draw from one to three deep puffs and then passes it on to his neighbor. The last man puts the pipe back on its rack. The third type of pipe

1: Tessmann--165 E-5 (1904-1909) 1913 FH9 Fang FH9

219
341
342

Fig. 110. Tobacco Planted in a Village Square.

(myô-tas) consists of a clay bowl and a wooden stem about 30 centimeters long, part of which has brass wire neatly wound around it (Fig. 109). Formerly, this pipe is supposed to have been as long as an arm among the Jaunde.

219 Proportionate to the indifferent habit of smoking is the indifferent care and affection with which the tobacco plant and its leaves are treated. Wherever a great deal of tobacco is imported by the trading houses, tobacco cultivation is completely neglected. /171/

Tobacco seeds are sown in whatever planting area happens to be convenient at the same time as the principal crop of the field is planted. Accordingly, the tobacco may be sown, for instance, with groundnuts twice a year. Frequently a small tobacco bed is laid out close to the village, or the seeds are planted next to the houses and sometimes on the village square (Fig. 110).

As soon as the plants attain a certain height, all the leaves except those on top are picked off. The top leaves are left so that the plant can continue to grow and bring forth blossoms and fruit. Then the leaves are harvested for the second time, and the fruit

has lived on human flesh, a piece of the flesh is found. That piece of flesh is taken out and put into an antelope horn together with scrapings of a vine called nzi bivur, a panther claw (dze nze), the talon of a sparrow hawk, and a firefly. The end of the horn is closed with the wax of white honey (eko abe).

The fetish thus made is either carried by the person who wishes to protect himself or is hung at the door of the hut. At night, if the bivur wish to enter the hut, the firefly will leave the horn and fly into the hut, giving warning of their approach. Then there is a battle (abal ngwel, the war of the ngwel) between the bivur and the horn fetish, from which the fetish almost always emerges victor.

III. The bieri. The bieri is a family fetish whose help must be sought before every important undertaking: hunting, fishing, a journey, choice of farm land, etc.,..., by the head of the family who owns the fetish.

It consists of the skull of a dead ancestor taken from the grave by a practitioner after the complete disappearance of the flesh. After having taken the skull, the practitioner goes into the forest and makes from the bark of a tree called andun (Berlinia sp.) a cylindrical box with a lid, big enough to hold the skull. The bottom of the box and the top of the lid are formed by a circular disc of wood nailed into the bark cylinder with little pegs of hard wood. The practitioner then cleans the skull and anoints it with an ointment of red wood sawdust (ba) and oil of raphia palm. The box is called nseb and the skull nsa bieri, the whole having the name of bieri. Into the box is also placed some red wood sawdust and a plant called nzen (a kind of fern), and sometimes also a little wooden bowl. The bieri thus made is put in a hidden place in the hut of the family head. It will speak in dreams to a family head whenever it wishes to notify a member of the family of some event. Sometimes a statuette roughly representing the person whose skull constitutes the main part of the fetish is put on the lid of the box. It is called nlu bieri (the head of the bieri).

No one may see the bieri unless he has eaten some alan (Strychnos icaja) in the course of a ceremony called ku melan. The heads of several families send the future initiates to look for roots of alan, of which they retain only the bark. Then in the morning each family head brings his bieri to a place prepared in advance in the bush near the

276 778 787 village which is called ngun [75] melan; he carries the bieri on his shoulder and appears to collapse under its weight. That position is a manner of worshipping the fetish. When everyone has gathered, animals, fowls, or kids are sacrificed; then, to the accompaniment of tomtoms, the neophytes dance, sing, and cry out, all the while chewing pieces of alan prepared the previous day. After a certain time, the effect of the root, combined with the excitement of the dances and songs, causes most of the participants of the celebration to become unconscious after many spasms. This unconsciousness may last two or three hours, during which the individuals retain a corpse-like stiffness. On awakening, each tells the elders what he has seen or what the bieri has told him in his dream. One may have been ordered to hunt, with the assurance of killing many antelope; another may have been warned of the impending death of a member of his family; still another may have been told of the imminent pregnancy of a brother's wife. All the Pahouin whom we have questioned state that predictions made by the bieri to people drunk with alan always come true.

Then the neophytes have the right to look at the bieri, whose boxes are open, making a vow not to speak of them to anyone who has not undergone the initiation of alan. Every uninitiated person who looks at a bieri falls ill, and only the care of a competent practitioner can prevent his death.

782 778 When a family head wants to supplicate his bieri, he sacrifices a hen, a duck, or a kid, or offers it the hind leg of an animal killed in the hunt, and pours blood on the skull. The meat is cooked in leaves by a woman, then taken to the bieri with stalks of manioc or a mash of bananas and water, by the one making the sacrifice. If, for example, the bieri is appealed to before a hunt, he who makes the sacrifice presents the food with these words:

"O tar ta mba bidzi olun wa to we nlem e to ma tune we yū, Binyu bon be wa y onzan vag bie betsir" (O father, see the good food, I want to dispel the anger that is in your heart. Your children die of want, give us meat).

778 782 787 Then he goes out of the hut because the bieri will not eat in the presence of a living being. Several hours later he comes back to look for the food left by the bieri. Its consumption, however, is not visible as it is accomplished immaterially. This food that has been brought to the watchers' hut [corps de garde] will be eaten only by the

769 number of prohibitions (with regard to the uninitiated and the
774 women) and obligations. It "separates" the initiated men, thus giving a privileged position — justified by the right to commune with the ancestors and to "see the Bièri" — to the most active elements of Fang society.

The initiation is particularly characterized (the culminating [276] moment of the series of ceremonies) by drunkenness produced by the plant alan, (1) which may result in long-lasting unconsciou-

1. Strychnos icaja.

ness.(2) The newly initiated man at this juncture becomes certain

2. E. Trezenem, op. cit., III, Le Bièri, pp. 74-76.

that he has enjoyed a revelation and from then on is in communication with the ancestors. He experiences the fervor of a communion that binds him to the whole society whose effectiveness he discovers at the same time: he has in fact become the object of predictions that are always realized. (3) He asserts himself, if we

3. Cf. idem., p. 75: "All the Pahouins whom we questioned assert that predictions made to people drunk on alan by the bièri have always been realized.

may use the expression, as a full-fledged Fang. The Bièri cult assumes therefore the highest function of aggregation. We stress the fact that initiation is carried out in the same place for several of the nd'ê bôt belonging to the same clan, thus strengthening the ties of kinship existing between closely related clan fragments, and tending to reconstitute, to make real, units larger than the individual groupings. On the other hand, initiation to this cult, [304 like circumcision (which takes place apart and appears to be 177] a recent acquisition of the Fang), creates groupings of young men who belong appreciably to the same age group. It emphasizes a link between generations (the "fathers" or "eldest" being

[98] community. After another sacrifice, the bevôn were again confined inside the ésam sô, where initiates had dug a narrow passage and covered it with wattling and earth, the bottom strewn with thorns, crushed pimento, and warrior ants. The bevôn would receive final instructions, then, after taking mud baths, grunting like hogs, they had to crawl through the passage previously filled with smoke, while the minkpwangôs struck and pricked them with assagais through the cover; a mvôn who rose up or tried to escape was immediately killed by prisoners stationed outside the enclosure. This was the third stage, the true "death of the sô," awu sô.

After leaving the esam, the bevôn were supposed to be aggressive, teasing, to worry the other villagers, steal food, fowls, etc., tear down barriers, and in general behave like wild beasts. This period lasted for several days, preceding the sortie of the sô, akui sô, a parade of the group in war dress, carrying spears engraved with the distinctive clan mark, ndem, which had been consecrated during the initiation. A feast followed. For six months (mbu) afterward, the new initiates were still subject to certain sexual and food prohibitions, from which they were freed if they killed a man during the period. At the end /100/ of this waiting time, they went away, painted white, into seclusion for a night and came back painted red, making the rounds of the village nine times in procession. Then they bathed in a stream where fishing was afterward forbidden until the initiation of the next group, apparently.

A young man thus initiated became a mone wôsô, child of the death of the sô (wu = to die; wôé = to kill), thereafter ready for marriage, which would make him a complete man, nya môsô. His [99] father might instruct him in the family cult, which till then he knew only in its externals; he was taught to identify the ancestral skulls kept in the biéti basket and to enter into communication with them [112] by means of the narcotic herb alan. Sometimes the instruction was given collectively in the melan rite, which, according to Stoll, complemented sô, the latter being androgynous, while the former was gynandrous. Sô was to give creative power, melan fecundity and wealth. Melan has a medical aspect lacking in sô; the participation of women is greater. Some elements seem to have survived until the present day, whereas the last sô ceremonies must have occurred about [114] 1940. Stoll gives a pretty full description in La tonétique des langues bantu ... du Cameroun /The Tonal System of the Bantu Languages ... of the Cameroons/ (no. 84).

of his descendants, in whose person he will be repeated rather than reembodied. It should be remembered that *bot* also means "authority," a notion that cannot be dissociated from that of name.

The cessation of vital functions, *awu* (from *wu*, to die), is not thought of as necessarily final; catalepsy, deep coma, anaesthesia, and real death are confused. It is evident that if the body is hurt during *awu*, a revival is impossible. A ghost, *kôn* (Fang, *khum*), is not necessarily physically dead; one of the most feared forms of sorcery, at which the *bekôn* are reputed to be particularly expert, consists of separating a person from his *nisim*, shade or double, by giving him the appearance of physical death, then in awakening the body which will thereafter automatically obey the sorcerer's orders and may be used by him for all sorts of ends, to go kill or steal, or, more prosaically, to work his plantations. Persons thus transformed into *bekôn* are recognized by their pallor, jerky movements, and haggard expression; they survive the experience /*operation*/ for only a few months before dying in great physical and moral agony (1).

1. I have reason—but no proof—to believe that this is more than a myth; perhaps the criminal use of a narcotic producing effects similar to those of Pentothal. A *kôn*, frightful to see, died at the Sangmélima dispensary in 1947. The judicial inquiry revealed nothing.

Death in the complete sense does not occur for some time after the cessation of vital functions, and funeral rites seem to have had the purpose of detaching the individual from his mortal shell. There were two abodes of the dead. The *bemia*, those unblemished by *ngôwel* (sorcery by *évu*), crossed the river-of-the-west or the sea to go to the village of Zâmbe (Zobeyo, Nzame) in a cold country where their *nisim* led a life rather like that in a terrestrial village where everything goes well (2). The *beyem* went down to *éndôlan*, the

2. According to Trilles, this would have been Venus, *otya alu*, "the night's torch."

The figure was placed on the new group's first family altar, and so afterwards were the skulls of the founder and of the benya bôñ of succeeding generations. A full bîéti basket was the sign of a group's antiquity, which doubtless implied prestige more than genuine authority, yet nevertheless represented the nearest approach to political authority that existed in the Fang group, particularly if one takes into account the fact that officials of interclan associations were chosen from among the owners of many skulls, whence prestige extended to a large number of mvôk or meyom. The prestige of the living was exerted through the authority of the dead.

Skulls were, indeed, the seat or receptacle of the individual's capacity for action (we must remember that bo • to make, boo • brain), and the use of skulls in the practice of magic was not confined to ancestral skulls only: the skulls of enemies killed in battle or sacrificed in anthropophagous ceremonies before or afterward were preserved, and so were those stolen from neighbors. In the same way the skulls of the kinds of animals desired were used for hunting rites. However, it seems that a distinction was made between family skulls and outsiders' skulls, only the first having a place in the ékwélé bîéti and appearing in family rites. The power of the skulls was increased by sprinkling them with sacrificial blood.

When a youth reached nya mbôñ age he had to learn to recognize his ancestors so as to be able to ask for their help when the occasion arose. Their skulls were shown to him until he could identify them individually and put them in the correct genealogical order. When he was able to do this, he was given a brew of the narcotic herb alan, then spent a night in the bîéti hut, facing the skulls, which had been removed from the ékwélé and placed on the altar on which strongly scented plants were burned. During the night the ancestors appeared and gave him a cognomen and imposed one or more new taboos (at the same time he was relieved of certain prohibitions connected with age). Apparently it was during this initiation that his individual totem was revealed (if it was indeed a totem).

This question of the totem is very poorly elucidated, in spite of some 600 pages devoted to the subject by Father Trilles. He distinguishes between clan, segment, individual, family, and society totems, etc. He also distinguishes a tutelary being, mvame, from the "effect of a tutelary being"; akam, an animal totem, from a dedicated animal or an incarnation of a man in an animal, etc. He

rite, and event in life, of which the orchestral element as well as the dance movements and costumes had a very precise symbolical meaning. Many of these dances have died out, either because they have lost their raison d'être (as with war and initiation dances, etc.) or because they have been prohibited by the administration and especially by the missions as obscene or pagan (fertility, funeral, medical dances, etc.). Those that survive have now a recreational or purely artistic character, which was only secondary before. It is significant that the number of dances in which both sexes take part has considerably increased and that nearly all are now open to the public and may be seen by spectators of any age or sex.

In spite of this falling off, there is still a large number and variety of dances. Among the most widespread may be mentioned:

Asia, an old fertility dance, especially among the Fang and Ntoumou; an orchestra of vertical drums, mbae and ngom, with "spoken" accompaniment of the drum-telephone, nkul; it is danced by professionals (women initiates of mevungu?) with bare torso, vegetable rattles at the ankles, unsewn wildcatskin skirts, wooden masks on the left arm; the leading dancer, Osua njem, inserts a horn into her vagina during the dance; the dancers apparently drug themselves with a decoction containing (notably) Indian hemp; the missions have forbidden this dance, and this has provoked several incidents.

menjal, called thus because the dance is accompanied by an orchestra of balafos; it is widespread except, perhaps, among the Boulou; it is performed by the young girls and little girls of a village; each village has its own tune and special costume consisting of a belt of raffia fiber, skirt and cap in "pastry-cook" style in the village colors, with a brassière worn in Christian villages.

Anyungé, sometimes called njeman fulutita, a Protestant dance (it must have been inspired by Swedish gymnastics used by a German-American M. P. A. /American Presbyterian mission?/ missionary to provide a substitute for "immoral" dances; si non è vero...), found especially among the Boulou but extending into northern Gabon under the aegis of the Movement for Regrouping Pahouin; it is a dance performed by young women and girls with a male leader, nlebe njeman, who conducts with a whistle; an orchestra of drums, nkul, mbae, and ngom, rattles

779 721 782 that would be against totemic law and would mean sacrilege. In order to avoid this ritual offense, which would necessitate expiation and would necessitate expiation and would furthermore wipe out all the efficacy of the sacrifice, the chief first of all approaches [551] the victim, and asks his name, race, and tribe. Is there no obstacle to the sacrifice? "A ne mvɛ," he cries, "a ne nwuba (he is good, he is 'dedicated')!" The man is then tied to the foot of the altar and very rarely does he resist. [74] All Africans resign themselves to death with almost unconscious ease, when they see that it is inevitable. (1)

1. In certain villages I have sometimes met such men destined for sacrifice, because they are often kept for many weeks. They walked around in the villages, apparently free, well fed, and well treated; the only sign of their captivity was a rather light block of wood well fastened to one of their feet, which they dragged along. Within the village this shackle was not much of an encumbrance, but in the forest it would have been an almost insurmountable obstacle to flight. Countless times, I have offered either to help them escape or to have the colonial authority free them. "What for?" they used to reply: "I'm well fed and treated; death is going to come anyway. Awu nzu mbɛmbɛ! (What's the use!)"

So as to prevent any possible struggle, the evening before, [276] the victim is given an intoxicating beverage, containing mostly the juice of ebɛ and of yam (hemp). As soon as he has been 779 721 782 302 386 tied to the altar, and the chief has pronounced the ritual words, the warriors start putting on their war dress. First they paint their bodies red with baza (1) dye, and upon this first layer they

1. Pterocarpus angolensis: the wood is

8: Bennett D-5 (ca. 1898) 1899 FH9 Fang FH9

X.—*Food. Cooking.*

Food used by the Fang is precisely similar to that of all other tribes inhabiting the great zone of palms and bananas as described by Humboldt. Added to these ordinary foods of the Fang is their liking for human flesh, indulged in to this day in spite of the law, which is often powerless to search and punish the offenders. Cassava, *odzè*, plantains, *bikwa*, crushed ground *kwila*, *nyongwa*, corn; *ombòle*, a most nutritive tuber, sweet potatoes, yams, palm oil, bananas, snails and various molluscs. Fish is wrapped in plantain leaves and boiled, or set on hot ashes and fire piled on top of the *bundle* of food. All kinds of meat is eaten, from deer down to the smallest bush rat; snakes are considered very good meat. No portion is wasted, every morsel of skin and intestines are eaten. Goats and chickens are raised for food and trade. Corn or other cereals are not used for the purpose of making bread. Milk is not used. Preparations of milk such as butter and cheese are not made. There is a marked preference for meats. When an animal is slaughtered, women bring wooden bowls to collect the blood in. The blood is often cooked mixed with palm oil. A Fang will eat almost any kind of known food and at any time, providing it is not his *Bbi* or taboo, given him during infancy, prohibiting the eating of a certain kind of food, unless partaken of under certain conditions. Except for the *Bbi* men, women and children partake of the same food. The Fang are improvident. When on long journeys they often chew a piece of Kola nut, but more commonly chew pieces of a certain root; it has several different names. Palm oil is extensively used in cooking. Salt (*ndo*) is much enjoyed and sought after in trade. Sugar is only used in the form of sugar cane and eaten uncooked. The chiefs, or rather headmen, have no special form of food. Eating earth is not indulged in. So far as I am aware, all fish, flesh and fowl is cooked before being eaten. Flesh is often extremely high, at times positively bad, before it is eaten, but not one morsel is ever wasted.

Fish, fowl, bush rats, snakes and all kinds of meats are smoked or sun-dried; food prepared thus is carried on journeys in the bush wrapped in leaves and eaten with *ndoa* (cassava) without any further preparation. Permanent ovens for baking are not in use. Meat is roasted on small spits over the log fire or wrapped up in leaves and hot ashes heaped around and on top of it. Native vegetables are frequently cooked with meats, plantains are usually boiled separately or roasted close to the fire. Most cooking utensils used by the Fang near the coast are iron or brass pots, imported by white traders; but farther inland the native pots are much more in vogue. These native pots are made of grey clay and sun-dried; they become harder and stronger by use, and vary in size and capacity from a pint to about three gallons.

Cooking vessels are not kept very clean, being simply rinsed out with a little water; but if the vessel is a brass trade pot or kettle, it is usually taken to the river or a near stream, and scoured bright; but I fear the chief reason for doing